



March 14, 2016

Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Kennedy and Representative Albis:

Wine Institute, an association of over 1,100 California wineries and affiliated suppliers dedicated to advocating the responsible consumption and enjoyment of wine, would like to lend its strong opposition to the passage of SB 384, "An Act Concerning the Application of the Bottle Bill to Wine and Liquor Bottles for Purposes of Funding State Parks".

Wine Institute, like Connecticut, is committed to environmental stewardship. Through our Sustainable Winegrowing Program, we provide California vintners and growers with information on how to conserve natural resources, protect the environment and enhance relationships with employees, neighbors and local communities. Wine Institute, therefore, supports efficient and cost-effective mechanisms to increase the recycling of wine bottles. To that end, we believe that resources in Connecticut would be better dedicated to municipal and comprehensive curbside recycling programs rather than the proposed inclusion of wine bottles in the bottle bill.

Curbside is the ideal recycling method for wine bottles, since pick-up is at home where the product is primarily consumed. Wine bottles are heavy, breakable, and take up limited household storage space, so they are NOT well suited for redemption programs that require the consumer to return them to a retail location or redemption center. Additionally, wine bottles do not typically create a litter problem and are more likely to be recycled at curbside.

A comprehensive curbside recycling program would likely be much more cost effective in increasing the recycling rate for wine bottles, rather than simply putting a redemption fee on every bottle. A deposit fee is essentially another consumer tax. A deposit fee on wine bottles increases the price of wine for Connecticut consumers. In addition, the high cost of complying with the law is also passed along to Connecticut wine consumers.

As an example:

Maine's current bottle bill is both costly and burdensome.

Wine Institute estimates that including wine bottles in Maine's returnable beverage container law costs wineries in excess of **\$6 million per year!** These costs are passed along from winery to wholesaler to retailer and ultimately to Maine wine consumers.

As you may know, Maine is one of only two states that include wine bottles in their bottle redemption laws. This inclusion forces wine wholesalers in Maine to open each case of wine and place a Maine redemption sticker on each bottle before the wine goes to retailers. Wineries pay wholesalers to perform this function. It is estimated that this time consuming process adds more than **34 cents to each wine bottle** sold in Maine!

Connecticut wine consumers will be similarly burdened!

- ✓ To demonstrate the magnitude of the potential cost to Connecticut wine consumers, the Beverage Information Group's 2015 Wine Handbook table "Consumption of Total Wine Ranked by State 2014" reports that **5,838,510** 9-liter cases of table wine were sold in Connecticut in 2014. This is equal to **70,062,120** wine bottles (5,838,510 x 12 bottles per case).
- ✓ The estimated cost to wineries, using the 2014 figures, and therefore to Connecticut consumers, just to sticker wine bottles to comply with an expanded bottle bill would be over **\$23 million!** (\$23,821,120 - using 34 cents per bottle).

Wine bottles do not typically create a litter problem and are far more likely to be recycled at curbside. Wine Institute respectfully urges the Committee on Environment to reject SB 384.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Carol A Martel
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Wine Institute